



THE COMMON OPERATIONS FRAMEWORK: EXECUTION

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Plans describe the ways and means through which given ends ([objectives](#) and [end states](#)) can be achieved. Plans are carried out through a process called “execution,” which involves putting into effect any courses of action, orders, or subordinate plans needed to achieve the ends specified by the governing plan. Execution takes place within the timeframe specified in the governing plan and usually encompasses some mechanism through which forces are tasked or ordered to carry out specific missions. Assessment of ongoing operations usually takes place during execution.

The process of tasking forces and generating orders for specific missions itself entails cycles of planning, execution, and assessment. Generally speaking, planning refers to activities intended to govern future operations and execution refers to actions taking place inside the timeframe spanning from whenever an order is given to carry out the governing plan to the point when the commander has decided that the operation can be terminated. Execution encompasses the commander’s “battle rhythm”—the deliberate cycle of command, staff, and unit activities intended to integrate and synchronize current and future operations. The tasking cycles that govern execution vary greatly between steady-state conditions (one or two fiscal years) and contingency or crisis operations (days or hours).
